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Merry Christmas

Souvenir Edition of

Poems

BY

M. H. CANTRELL

1916
Red Bluff, California

G.T.R. Feb. 7.17.

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Respectfully,

W. J. Cantrell

Souvenir Edition of Poems

By M. H. Cantrell

Christmas, 1916

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Dear Friend:

Please accept this Souvenir Edition of a few of my poems and the portraits of myself and family as a token of our friendship for you. I had it printed for a Christmas souvenir for our friends of whom you are one.

Several of these poems are only excerpts of copyright editions of 1900 and 1906, and some are new ones. Hence they are in fragment form—scarcely any of which are printed in full on account of space. For instance, Imagination and The Sinking of Atlantis are mere extract stanzas of a long poem containing about five hundred stanzas of which these are only samples. Also Christmas Night is a short extract of Midnight Reveries which is complete in more than a hundred similar Spenserian stanzas as printed in full in the 1906 edition. The same is true as to some of the others. All the single verses were taken from longer poems. A few, however, are complete short poems as you will readily perceive.

If you should find only one sentiment in all of them that awakens a responsive thought or feeling for the betterment of mankind, the author will feel repaid for the time he has taken in editing and presenting them to you as a 1916 Christmas greeting.

Most respectfully,

THE AUTHOR.

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JAN 29 1917

No. 1.

THE DAWN OF A NEW EPOCH.

I stand in the twilight glimmer
Of an epoch passing out,—
In the dawn of marvelous innovations
Of an epoch wrapped in doubt.

MIDNIGHT REVERIES,

Christmas Night

'Tis now the pensive hour of musing deep
On night's enhallowed hush sweet silence stands,
And raptured thought, upborne on revery's sweep,
Strays 'yond its bounds the gulf of vision spans,
And from imagination's dreamful tower scans
The realms of fancy which unfold to sight
A better future, better hopes and plans,
For who could muse on scenes of such a night
Nor feel within the better thoughts awake to light?

All harshen sounds are hushed and silence broods
Like blessings borne on incense-laden breeze;
Within the peaceful calm no changeful moods
My reveries swerve or swage but to appease;
So trends the hallowed theme with heavenly pleas.
For mild deep musing doth all malice chain;
Through long sweet dreamful hours of thoughts like these
No withering cares flow back upon the brain,
Or saddened memories that awake the soul to pain.

From out the midnight silence seems to come
From many voices out of One that say,
"Look up to heaven, be not blind or dumb,
Behold how all the orbs one God obey,
The form thou wearest now He made from clay,
Gave it thy soul — why not to Him return,
For he may hope who feels desire to pray?
O thou, this all-important lesson learn—
For each benighted soul the heavenly watchfires burn.

O Christmas night, Religion's holiest hour!
What heavenly hope is hallowed in thy hush!
When we forget ourselves in awe of the power
Of God; the stars, the mellow moonbeams' blush,
The softened sounds of waterfalls, the rush
Of murmuring streams meandering on their way,
The wind's low sigh, the gurgling fountains' gush,
When the mild moon resumes her silent sway
And from her zenith height shines downward bright as day

Full on the dreamful hush she shone but now
As on the Manger Babe in splendor wild
She shone and lit the halo on His holy brow;
Propitious peace proclaimed the Sacred Child
As on a world of woe He gazed and smiled:
'Twas ages long ago but still the midnight theme,
The moon, the Babe, the Virgin Mother undefiled,
Awake repentant souls from out the dream
Of selfish thoughts to those that breathe of One Supreme.

Religion seems to hallow memory then
When all that's good and true and loved return,
And at the holy shrine not made by men
Some prayer we offer and in meekness learn
To humbly bow in spite of all we spurn:
Then love for God revives--the doubter fears,
The Spirit speaks but only souls discern,
From out the past a phantom host appears—
The sins of life brought back by the refluent years.

THE MIDNIGHT MASS,
Or Watch Meeting

Darkness has veiled the mellow light,
The moon her silvery shroud unfurled,
And somber silence broods tonight
Upon the cold and cheerless world.

Athwart the waves of yonder stream
Like sparks of spray the moonbeams quiver,
And all is tranquil as a dream
Save the flow of the rushing river.

Hushed are the echoes on the breeze,
All sounds subdued as if by awe impressed.
The zephyrs sigh thro the boughs of the trees
But waken not the soul's sweet rest.

The sentinel stars so mildly bright
Thro all the night their watch are keeping.
Calmed are the sighs of the sorrowing tonight
For in soft sleep they know no weeping.

Hark! it is midnight's tranquil noon,
The church bells chime the midnight mass.
And like yon pale and placid moon
The new years seem to come and pass.

A merry chime their peals enrolling
The New-Year's birth with joyous cheer;
A solemn dirge their chimes are tolling,
'Tis the knell of the dying year.

The fleeting years, how swift they pass!
With us who watched the closing year
When last we held the midnight mass
Alas! alas! are all not here,

Yon mournful marble points the way
That all on earth must sometime go.
Then who is here tonight so gay
That may escape that cup of woe?

For each a mournful hour will come
And change the brightest joys to tears;
The gayest shall at last succumb
However long that death defers.

May each rejoice with every breath
While yet he may in youthful bloom,
But first prepare your soul for death
To meet the angel at the tomb.

DUTY:
Then it behooves each one tonight
At once to hear, believe, repent
Confess, forgive, be baptized right,
And love the brethren, be content.

THE APPARITION

Is it day? I was so restless last night
And the pale moon gave such glimmering light
Through the broken clouds
That her quivering rays through the window pane
Fell checkered on my pillow where had lain
One who sleeps in shrouds;—
Low and silent laid
By the streamlet's marge—hushed in death's cold sleep—
Where the spirit vigils their lonely night-watch keep
Neath the willow's shade

The wind was wild and high when I woke
Through the crossing boughs the moonbeams broke
In livid g'eaming
And again her angel form did appear
All wreathed in love, and I thought to call her
But I was dreaming—
I looked but alas!
I could not see—her spirit form had fled
'Twas only an apparition of the dead
On the midnight pass

The tenderest call cannot waken her now,
Birds sing above her on the willow's bough,
But she hears not
Their lovely lay, nor longer sighing caress
Fondle me with loving tenderness;
No, all, all's forgot—
Never, never more
Will she enfold me—she sleeps in peace
By the streamlet's marge, but sorrow will cease
On the spirit shore.

Yes, I remember it all, 'twas in the spring
When flowers blow and birds are wont to sing,
And the stilly air
Fraught with the fragrance of odorous blooms
Spreads through all the woody aisles rich perfumes—
And still lingering there
Till dead Autumn leaves
Inhale with arid breath their sweets away,
Like lulling dreams upon our slumbers prey—
All our love deceives.

BIRDS OF THOUGHT

Wild and high the sea birds cry,
And all are plumed for flight—
To perch unknown they all are flown,
And I am sad to-night.

The night is black, they'll all come back
To-morrow's early dawn,
Then slumber deep from my lids will creep
And my fears will all be gone.

My heart beats quick with pulses thick
My thoughts are plumed for flight,
For sisters three long lost to me
I yearn to see to-night.

The night is dark and listen, hark!
'Tis but my nervous breath
Sighing low with a shuddering flow
Like the whisper of death.

A thought so strange,—beyond the range
Of reason's stern control—
Like fevered dreams of vision seems
To bewilder my soul.

But thoughts of Doubt, like birds that're out
In a shelterless night,
Will feel the lack in the midnight black
Of a Guide that is right.

The years creep on our joys are gone
Before we are aware,
And care and pain besiege the brain
With the thoughts of despair.

The years are fled, their pleasures dead—
Time thrust them down the slope,
And age is here with nothing to cheer
Except delusive hope.

God will sum in a world to come
The moments of each year
And task us anew with something to do
For those we squandered here.

DRIFTING DOWN THE STREAM—

The Sacramento River

Musing in the moonlight
Drifting down the stream,
Floating soft at midnight
Gently as I dream.

Down the Sacramento—lonely
In a frail canoe,
You and I, and—only
Room enough for two.

Starry skies above me,
Mellow moon so bright,
Smile as though they love me,
Shining all the night.

Starry Skies below me,
Moon inverted too,
Shining up to show me—
"Upward from the blue."

Sloping hills receding,
Woodlands whirling past,
How the shores are speeding—
Gliding smooth and fast.

How the river rushes
Onward to the sea,
Gurgles, groans, and gushes,
Flowing swift and free.

Musing in the moonlight,
Making music sweet,
Floating soft at midnight
As the tides retreat.

Sweetest strains are straying—
Flowing from my flute;
All the while I'm playing
Echoes follow suit;

Mellow notes are dying—
Echoes far away,
Softly seem their sighing—
Sighing as I play;

Murmurs down the river
Making mellow moan,
Sweeter than the giver—
Echoes' softer tone,

Making music double,
Notes and echoes low—
Drowning all my trouble
In their ebb and flow.

A THANKSGIVING DOXOLOGY

Blessed be our Heavenly Father,
Blessed be His Son,
Blessed be the Holy Spirit,
Blessed all in One.

Blessed be the holy angels,
Heavenly messengers they
That "encampeth round about them
That fear Him" and obey.

"Are they not all ministering spirits
For the sake of them
Who shall be heirs of salvation"
In a spiritual realm?

Blessed be our God forever,
And His praise prolong,
To Him who has blessed me ever
I consecrate this song.

A HYMN TO MY COUNTRY'S FLAG

Forward forever, O Flag of the free,
Freedom shall triumph wherever thou be;
Hope of the slave if he only behold—
Free if he touch but the hem of thy fold;
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Monarchs were masters through-out the wide world
Ere thou wert born and by freemen unfurled;
Flag of an empire not ruled by one head
But by the people who govern instead;
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Peace is thy motto with malice for none,
War to the death if by tyrants begun;
God and forgiveness thy terms to the foe
When he has fallen, in his hour of woe.
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Welcomed wherever thy stripes and thy stars
Brings the free ballot and bigotry bars—
Stars of heraldic redemption of right,
Stripes for correcting the doctrine of might:
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Thou hast annulled the prerogative of kings,
Gave our Republic her starspangled wings,
Built on the base of the home and the school,
First to proclaim it, "the people shall rule.":
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Not to invade and to vanquish like Rome,
But to uplift and enlighten the home;
Teach the world to change the sword for the pen,
Make of mankind one brotherhood of men:
Hope is awaken and waiting for thee,
Waiting for freedom, O Flag of the free.

Never a subject subdues to thy reign,
Never an exile casts from thy domain,
Where thou art planted forever shall dwell
Freedom of speech and of worship as well:
Where thou art planted forever shall dwell
God and hope: Flag of my country, farewell.

DO NOT NEGLECT THE LITTLE ONES

Do not neglect the little ones;
A baby's budding soul is waxen mold
And shaped for life by every word it's told,
Then O beware of jokes and puns
And careless words in lightness said
Lest they a meaning false convey,—
The minds of these, like little trees,
Once bent will stay.

Do not neglect the little ones,
Nor think their little wicked ways are cute
Because they're small, such bears but evil fruit,—
Who does, to God his duty shuns;
But train while young what God commands
And vigilance is the price—
Those little hands are tendril bands
That cling to vice.

Do not neglect the little ones,
For such inherit Heaven's kingdom blest;
Whate'er beside not one of these molest,
Lest God himself in wrath disowns
And punish in a world to come
Those who neglect them here:
Even the dull who may seem dumb
Are not for sneer.

TO MY LITTLE NIECE, DEWENE FLYNT

What art thou laughing about, O Dewene?
Laughing aloud at thyself to be seen!
Whilst thou art prattling and prattling so gay,
Thinking that it will always be May,
And thy employment will always be play,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay.
Aged but a year and a day.

What art thou crying about, O Dewene?
Crying as laughing only to be seen:
Grief for the toy that has rolled from thy sight
Which is thy world and thy hope and delight—
Pleased with a bauble or anything bright,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay
Thinking of nothing but play.

What art thou thinking about, O Dewene?
Thinking of Wonderland fairies, I ween;
Threading life's shuttle with gossamer gleams,
Wrought in a warp which impalpable seems,
Weaving an infantine fabric of dreams
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay,
Thinking of nothing but play.

I too am thinking today, O Dewene—
Thinking of thee in the far unforeseen;
Life in its blossom so blithesome but now,
Soon with its sorrows to sadden thy brow,
Beauty to blast and the body to bow,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay
Thinking of only today.

Thus I am thinking today, O Dewene,
Thinking of thee in the far unforeseen;
What false pretenses! friendships untrue!
What sad experiences! pleasures how few!
What thorns of sorrow to pierce thy heart through!
Ere thou hast crossed the dark way,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay,

I have consulted God's Word, O Dewene,
Thy horoscope from the Scriptures to glean;
This is thy future, by His Book I divine,—
For all who follow its teachings to the line,
Chastity, wisdom, and truth will be thine,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay,
Think of thy future's bright day.

Consult the Scriptures daily, O Dewene,
Study them well to know what they mean.
For only they can cast thy horoscope,
Fullest in fortitude and strongest in hope,
Firmest and fittest with evils to cope,
Thou inexperienced sweet Fay,
Think of thy future's bright day.

TO LITTLE GRADY

Be good my boy, be ever good,
Let others do, if any would,
The wrong for spite in passion's rage;
Be good, be kind, be thoughtful—sage
Be patient with the dull and slow
And in their hearts thy love will grow;
In riper years 'twill bud and bloom
And bear thee fruit beyond the tomb.

Be modest, manly and polite,
Be ready to speak out for right,
Be on the side of God and Truth
And make thyself a model youth,
And in thy years of manhood's bloom
No scowl thy features will assume—
Be ever pure and calm and kind,
The face reveals the thoughts of mind.

Be honest, faithful and sincere,
Be always bright and full of cheer,
The gloomy soul can never be
A fit abode for spirits free.
Thy country needs such men to make
Her future laws when faith shall break
When evil men with greed for gold
Her honored name have bought and sold

Be studious in thy childhood's spring
That when life's winter comes 'twill bring
Thee wisdom in abundant store
Of days well spent in useful lore,
Then age with all its years will be
A triumph, not a curse, to thee,
And when the grave demands thy frame
'Twill bear above an honored name

PHASES OF LIFE

Life is but a mold
To cast a soul that lives beyond decay,
And when the soul her earthly aims unfold
Flings the mold away.

The long sought treasure
We may ever strive to reach in vain,
If gained is but an empty pleasure
Lengthened out of pain.

For the soul that craves it
Will find it useless in the grave,
And often all the good, in life, he saves it
And becomes its slave.

So beware of riches
Except ye use it well for noble things,
Love God, adorn His doctrines, fill your niches,
Be ye more than kings.

Bold perseverance,
Selfrelying, scales the tower of fame,
And with the hand of patient endurance
Writes in gold his name.

* * * *

Our love is like a trailing vine,
Within itself it can not rise,
Must round some kindred object twine.
Or else it withers, droops and dies

Bless the widow and the orphan spake the Christ to man of old,
Feed the poor and clothe the naked, cease thy love and lust for gold.

THE SIBER'S SOLILOQUY

'Tis hoary winter now, and melancholy
Sadness pervades the hushed air! Dim through
The gathering gloom the moonbeams pale are sleeping,
Enthroned in placid awe, and rigor swept
By winds, the fleecy, snow-capped mountains raise
Their lofty brows in regal grandeur now;
And, frowning from their towering heights, their tall
White-ribbed peaks cast an icy chilliness
Upon the cold and desolate landscape.

Banked along
The edying horizon—lulled and low—
Lie shattered storm-torn clouds in sullen repose,
The vapor-curded moon, behind the mountain's brow
Is setting dreamily. Now robed in white,
The cold and solemn summits, bleak and bald,
Cast their long chilly shadows cold athwart
The twilight plain. And rising, spectral-like,
Wild winds beat at the screaky casements, moan
And rattle through the lonely prison bars,
Pass with the fitful gust and die again
Upon the placid stillness.

Lo! the glassy streamlet,
Set with the crystal studs of winter, winds
It's struggling course slow through the icled reeds
Reflects the tinsiled beauties of the cold
And flaky Heavens.

Silence settles deep,
And on the lake and landscape lone, now broods
A breathless hushedness that wakes the mind
To sad reflections and the heart to sympathy.
Housed in the homes of plentitude and pride,
No love or word goes out to poor unthought-of
Uncared-for victims of the heartless Czar.
And as the warm life currents flood the frame
From fountains fresh with food's supply and spread
The lineaments with crimson glow of health,
No thought of destitution pleads at conscience
For our assistance.

As the keen cutting wind
Comes hurrying up from the bleak, cold North
And howls and moans again through crevices
And casements of the grim old prison walls,
And dies again in stillness and then comes
Again upon the rowdying bluster like
Some weird night fiend to chase away the dreams
Of quietness, I fancy to myself
All of the forms of wretchedness and woe
Careering at large o'er the fruitless fields
And wastes of cold Siberia's shelterless plains.
All the untold, unspeakable sorrows of
The exile whose scant stores, exhausted by
The ceaseless scourge of famine and disease,
Now feels with blunted pride and deadening dread
The soul-disturbing pangs of mind's unrest.
And as I look out from the prison window
Upon the frozen grandeur there, I draw
One long sad view of wretchedness and woe;
And grimly pictured on the niveous scroll
Wide desolation sleeps in calm repose.
Hollow-eyed misery creeps from cells of want,
And Famine skeleton-robed stalks about
The haunts of poverty and looks upon
The foodless scene with wasted, hollow cheeks,
And gestures at the scant supplies of nature
Locked in the frozen folds of winter.
The midnight lamp, my only companion
Now flickers faintly in the frosty silence
Like some wiered specter-courier from out
The memory's past, and speaks in tongueless whispers
Of mother, home and little ones at rest
And tender tears kept back drown half the sadness
Of these melancholy reveries.
And as it casts its gleam in gentle glimmers
Out through the casement on the tinsiled snow-drifts,
Reflection brings to view again the wild
Bewildering slope of departed years
Revealed on one wild range, and as I gaze
Upon the sterile wastes of Siber's hills
I long but long in vain to see once more
The family fireside and familiar scenes

That long since faded into empty nothingness
And say to that dim lamp expire in gloom
And leave me all alone as if thou ne'er
Hadst been—It blares—'tis darkness now. From thee
Dim lamp, I learn a lesson. Youth, like thee,
Blazes with hope's eager expectations—
Blares at the many turning-points of life—
Expires in feeble age.

IMAGINATION

The bold imagination with its all beholding gaze
Explores the mysteries farther than scientific eye surveys;
Upborne on thoughts ethereal, more of pleasing fancy fond,
It sweeps the dome of distance, dives into the depths beyond.

It feeds on lovely visions—sails the fancy-seas unknown,
Draws out the classic features from the shapeless blocks of stone,
It mounts the starry stairway leading upward, ever higher,
With never sated vision and with thoughts that never tire.

It dredges out the oceans, sweeps beyond the starry dome,
And ranges out forever and is everywhere at home;
Restores the forms of fossils and repeoples all the past,
And from the living present molds the mystic future's cast.

The patriarchal father with his venerable head of gray
Alone beside the dying embers makes a sad survey;
He sees the vacant places with his aged vision slack—
They're gone forever but imagination brings them back.

Their places filled by fancy and the absent cease to roam—
Again around the family fireside sees the loved at home;
The little cherub prattler still in fancy-vision lives,
He feels its warm carresses which imagination gives,

He hears its tender prattle as he muses by the fire—
Its voice is hushed forever though it never can expire
For memory mirrors ever and imagination burns—
The grave is lost in revery as the faded form returns.

Thus soars imagination through the boundless realms of space,
A vagrant child of fancy and without a resting place,
An iridescent vision like the rainbow's mystic law
That onward moves before us as we nearer to it draw.

We see it there in fancy but a fading frost of blue,
A bow of crimson beauty moving onward with the view—
The mind's mirage of memory with its vague inverted schemes,
Arising on our visions and dissolving with our dreams.

It lures the youthful dreamer onward to the "heap of gold,"
It lures the superstitious and it lures the brave and bold,
It lures the aged dotard onward to the end of life.
And bends a bow of beauty o'er a world of woe and strife.

We see the visions vanish as we venture on and on,
We reach the end bewildered and the "heap of gold" is gone;
We reach the end bewildered and we fathom for the truth
We start again to journey where we started in our youth.

THE SINKING OF ATLANTIS

I saw Atlantis swallowed up with all her freight of souls—
The wall of waves that wailed her dirge and now above her rolls;
I felt the wild upheaval, and I heard the awful roar
When earthquakes rent the ocean and the rifted waves closed o'er.

Upon the bed of ocean lie her spires and steeples strown
Beneath the weight of waters and their ceaseless seething moan;
The wrecks of mighty temples buried in their briny graves —
The grim abode of monsters and the sport of angry waves.

There lie her gorgeous cities silent in eternal sleep
Where rise no more the war-cry and no howling tempests sweep;
There silence reigns eternal save the seething of the surge.
That in a monotone of sadness wails a ceaseless dirge.

There stands the gaudy palace settling slowly in the mud,
Around it seethe the surges, rolls above the ceaseless flood;
Its domes and towers toppled but erect the court and halls
With many a rent and chasm in its wave-beleaguered walls.

There strange abyssal fauna spectre-like in silence sport,
There gorgeous ocean goblins haunt the alcoves of the court
There phosforescent monsters o'er the oozy bottom creep
And with their lurid lanterns light the darkness of the deep,

And there she lies forever, buried from the sight of man,
No resurrection for her save the evolution plan—
When raised by some upheaval when the ages shall reclaim
Her from the depths of ocean through volcanic force and flame.

When many million ages roll before the human eye,
Earth's cooling center shrinking leaves the beds of ocean dry,
Or by some seismic rupture when the isles their shapes revise
From out the world of water man may see Atlantis rise.

Far in the future's future when her clime has changed its zone,
Her valleys veiled with verdure and her hills new groves have grown,
And crowded populations dot again her fruitful plains
Some future archaeologist may unearth her lost remains.

"I can" are the thunder-words that drive
The submarine and navigate the air;
"I can't" is the epitaph of failure
Upon the tombstone of despair.

* * * *

From the present looking backward
Lies the past a field of blood,
And the cries of crime are wafted
O'er the centuries' crimson flood.

Long I to uplift the fallen
Ere I sleep within the tomb,
See the heathen lands converted,
See the Christian bud in bloom.

I may not behold the blossom
But 'twill bloom and bear its fruit,
For the Christ shall reap the harvest
Where the Gospel seed takes root.

GRADY T. CANTRELL

PSALM 150.

An exhortation to praise God with all kind of instruments.

1 Praise ye the Lord.

* * * *

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and pipe. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals. Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

MRS. M. H. CANTRELL and her Musical Instruments

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